

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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OUR FIRST AGM

Our first Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 8 May at the Old Fire Station. All members of the Committee were re-elected and, in addition, Mel Hooper was elected as the new Treasurer in place of Janet Liversidge who was elected to the new role of Events Secretary.

A copy of the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2001 is attached to this newsletter and it can be seen that, thanks largely to a grant from Barnet Council, the financial position is reasonably healthy. We are in the process of acquiring some new equipment in connection with our oral history project so our current surplus will not be so large in future.

Following the AGM, Andrew Mussell gave a very interesting talk called Famous People in Friern Barnet. Andrew surprised many of us by featuring people who had somewhat dubious reputations, but we suppose that they are more interesting than upright citizens! Andrew did not have enough time to mention the more light-hearted residents so, to redress the balance, we would like to remind you that former citizens include Eric Morecambe, Peter Sellers and Max Bygraves.

After the meeting Andrew kindly cut our First Birthday cake (courtesy of Tesco, who supplied the sponge, and Janet who did the icing.)

THE SPY'S CAT

A bizarre sequence of events took place in Friern Barnet about 14 years ago and which was reported in the national press. Apparently a postcard appeared on a tree in Friern Barnet Lane, near the junction with Myddelton Park carrying the usual pleas for a lost cat: ".....small, black and white, answers to the name of Frosty. Reward, phone 361 7777."



Over the next few months similar cards would appear, with all the numbers, adjectives and names changing with each message pinned up. Although no one would have noticed it, the messages were in code, placed there by a Czech spy. Pat Cleland, our membership secretary, carries the tale further; she remembers that the spy lived in Silver Birch Close in an upstairs

flat, and his cover was blown when the people downstairs, noticing that the interference on their TV was in Morse code, called the police and were told to keep a low profile, since the spy was under surveillance. We don't know the end of the story, so if any of you have a cutting from the papers (it was some time in 1987), we should be pleased to see it.

SCHOOLDAYS

One of our new members, Mrs Elizabeth Carter, wrote us a long and fascinating letter full of her many reminiscences of Friern Barnet. Elizabeth was educated at Hollickwood Junior School between 1948 and 1952 and then Woodhouse Grammar School between 1952 and 1959 and she would like to hear from anyone who remembers her.

Elizabeth also pointed out that there is a website www.friendsreunited.co.uk where you can check under the name of your old school to see if any other pupils have entered their details. We checked it out and it is quite fascinating. Obviously, the more people that record their names, the better the site becomes; so if you want to contact old school chums, log on now!

If you would like to contact Elizabeth please contact David Berguer on 020 8444 3089 who will give you her details.

THE PLAY'S THE THING

For those who have not been to the Incognito Theatre in Holly Park Road, we can thoroughly recommend it. This is the theatre where David Jason started his career, which says a lot about the kind of quality of performance that you can expect.

Although space is very limited (it only seats 50 and the dressing rooms are *above* the stage), you can expect thoroughly good live entertainment for the price you'd pay for a cinema ticket.

The next presentation is 'Allo 'Allo from 10 -14 July and should be well worth a visit. For ticket information phone 020 8803 1947.

BARNET TO THE RESCUE

Back in November 2000, Haringey Council closed Grosvenor Road N22 to through traffic. This, coupled with the erection of traffic lights at the junction of Colney Hatch Lane and Alexandra Park Road, has led to traffic jams and a great deal of opposition from local residents. Unfortunately one of the side effects has been the drop in trade suffered by the shops in Wetherill Road (which is in Barnet.) This has led to one of the shops closing down.



Barnet Council have recently erected the above sign at the corner of Wetherill Road and Colney Hatch Lane. We hope it works and

that no more livelihoods are threatened.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Following our piece in the last Newsletter concerning the old telephone exchanges covering Friern Barnet, we were reminded by John Phillips that we had omitted to mention both HILLside, which covered North Finchley and western Friern Barnet, and ENTerprise, which covered the eastern part. Thank you, John, for pointing this out.

THE CENSUS - A SENSE OF (FAMILY) HISTORY

by Colin Barratt

Local history and family history often become intertwined. Having just filled in our census forms, it's worth remembering how valuable this information is. For local historians the published analyses of previous censuses are very useful for examining how areas have changed and developed, grown or declined. For family historians, unfortunately, for personal privacy, access to the original data is not allowed for 100 years, but this still leaves all of the Victorian census returns (1841-91) available to research.

If you've put together a family tree with names and dates, it may begin to look like a rather bare tree, with no covering of "leaves" or, in other words, the details of your ancestors such as: where were they born, where did they live, what were their jobs, how many were in the house, did they have servants, who were their neighbours, what was the area like? The Victorian censuses are the most fruitful sources of this information. They list everybody (well, almost) in the country on census night, every 10 years.

Copies of the census returns, on microfilm, are in many local record offices and libraries, as well as the Family Record Centre, 1 Myddelton Street, Islington, EC1R 1UW. If your ancestors lived in a large town or city you will need an address, otherwise the name of the small town or village, as the censuses are arranged by place. You may be able to track down addresses by using published street directories, or from birth, marriage or death certificates.

Many local name indexes have been compiled by Family History Societies around the country, but the only complete index is the 1881, which is available on either microfiche sheets or CD ROMs. The CD ROM pack is excellent, and easy to use, with the whole population of 26 million names listed. If any member of the Society would like a name searched for, let me know, as I have a copy of the pack of 25 CDs.

The censuses were not only household-to-house surveys, but included inmates of institutions such as workhouses, boarding schools, hospitals, men in barracks or on board naval ships (in home waters). They also recorded whether people were blind, deaf or dumb, and from 1871, imbeciles, idiots and lunatics were identified! The inmates of Colney Hatch Asylum are of course listed.

These records have many riches to yield up, but don't be surprised if you get frustrated at chasing your family around the country. Historical research, whether family or local, is not straightforward - that's half the fun of course

Note: 1901 is coming soon! The census will be opened for research

at the beginning of 2002. More about that nearer the time. If you need any help or information on family history please call me on 020 882 2246 or you can e-mail me at: colin_barratt@yahoo.co.uk

BOUNDARY MARKERS

One of our members, John Holtham, who lives in Thurlestone Avenue, told us of a boundary marker that sat in the garden of his next-door neighbour, bearing the legend 1887. Hornsey Parish. No 364. We asked him to take a photo and here it is:



As you can see, the marker also lists several important church-folk of the day.

Your first reaction may well be, "What is a Hornsey marker doing in Friern Barnet?" but, if you look at your old maps, you will see that there was an arm of Hornsey stretching north into Friern Barnet. We are indebted to John for the photo and we should also like to ask you to send us photos of local markers, or anything else you think suitable. It is best if they are printed to 7" x 5" size so that the details show up clearly.

BARNET MUSEUM

Those of you who enjoyed Dr Gillian Gear's talk on The Three Barnets may like to visit Barnet Museum, which she runs. It is in Wood Street, next door to the Old Court House. Opening times are: Tues, Weds and Thurs 2.30 - 4.30 and Sat 10.30-12.30 and 2.00 - 4.00.

SHOPPING

Our Meeting on 12 June was entitled Shopping As It Used To Be and was hosted by Ollie Natelson. Ollie traced the history of shopping from the early days when itinerant peddlars roamed the country, to the present day where retail shopping patterns are changing rapidly. As we had hoped, there were reminiscences of shops in Friern Barnet and many people recalled shopping at the old style Sainsbury's, with its marble topped counters and individual queues at each section. Colin Barratt had obtained photographs of the Lamson overhead wire system which is still in existence at Grout's in Palmers Green, which brought back memories of drapers shops of old.

One of our members, Hilda Clark,

who lives in Somerset, very kindly wrote us a letter with some of her memories, and we related her story of her mother who bought a carpet in Caledonian market in 1934 and which lasted through to 1980!

We have been surveying the shops in the area and we were able to show how rapidly things change. In High Road Whetstone there were 11 food shops and 6 restaurants in 1979. Today there are 14 restaurants or take aways and only two specialist food outlets. A similar story applies in Friern Barnet Road where 1950 saw 17 food shops and 4 restaurants and today there are 10 food shops and 14 restaurants. It is also interesting to note that out of the 90 odd shops in Whetstone, only 11 of them were there 22 years ago.

To prove just how volatile the retail sector is, here are two photographs which we took recently:



*New mobile phone shop at
185 Woodhouse Road*

In order to record all these changes we need your help. We have now introduced a Report Form, a copy of which is enclosed with this Newsletter. We ask you to record any changes that you see, or any reminiscences that you recall, and write these down and return the form to us so that we can add these to our database. If you need further copies, these will be available at all our future meetings or you can call David Berguer on 020 8444 3089 who will be happy to send you some more.



*Notice in the window of Amy's Hardware
at 778 High Road North Finchley*

DEMOLITION

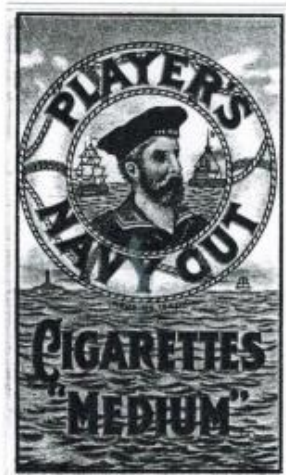
All the buildings between the Bull and Butcher and Totteridge Lane have now been demolished in preparation for the building of a new Boots chemist on the site. Sadly we have said goodbye to Moore's the butchers, Hillside Bakeries, Toby Norman Tailors, Balou's and the North London Hospice shop.

Prior to the start of the construction work, the site was investigated by a team of archaeologists from Thames University (formerly Brunel) along with HADAS volunteers. John Heathfield (local historian and FB&DLHS member) tells us that, although Victorian cellars destroyed much of the earlier evidence, he believes that a remaining wall could be that of The George Inn (1610 - 1750) and a ditch, further downhill, might date back to the 14th century.

NOSTALGIA RULES O.K.

We have been slowly accumulating a number of what we call "relics" but what are more commonly referred to in antique dealer circles as "memorabilia". We now have a varied collection of old tins, packets and bottles, some of which date back to the thirties.

Names such as Oxydol, Camp Coffee, Andrew's Liver Salt, Player's Weights and Zubes should get your memories working overtime.



Those of you who attended our Shopping Meeting will have seen a display of these and we shall be featuring them again at some of our

future Meetings when the subject seems relevant. We also have a number of rather elderly magazines (Eagle comic, Men Only, Picture Post and Illustrated London News to name but a few) as well as items like a Bell Punch machine and ticket rack from the days when every bus had its own conductor and when LT staff wore smart uniforms rather than jeans and trainers!

If you are brave enough to venture into your attic, or if you are clearing out your garden shed, please pause for a moment before consigning the contents to a skip. We would be happy to come round and take some of the items off your hands to add to the Society's collection.

Whilst we are on the subject of building up our archives, can we please ask you to search your old photo albums for any pictures or postcards of Friern Barnet or its citizens. In particular we are keen to source photographs of:

- * The Railway Mission Hall (tin hut) that stood on the site between the railway and what is now Monarch Dental Services at 45-47 Friern Barnet Road
- * Any shop in Friern Barnet
- * The houses that stood on Lander's Corner, that wide sweep between High Road and Bowes Road, now occupied by a block of flats
- * The original St John's Primary School for Girls, which stood on the site now occupied by Gilmore Court, on the pedestrian link between Goldsmith Road and Glenthorne Road

With your permission we would like to copy any photographs that you have and, of course, we will return them to you in original condition.

DELVING INTO THE PAST -contd
In the last Newsletter we reproduced some extracts from Finchley Press of the period Jan - June 1927. We now have pleasure in completing the year with snippets from the

July - Dec period. For those of you who keep boring your children with tales of how it always used to snow at Christmas, please show them the entry for Dec 30 - that should shut them up!

Finchley Press July - Dec 1927

Jul 1: To see the Eclipse. A number of scholars from St James's School journeyed to the Alexandra Palace on Wednesday morning to view the eclipse. Like all Londoners, they were disappointed.

Jul 8: A Good Stunt. For the first week after opening the receipts from the putting green at Friary Park amounted to £5. 15s.

Jul 15: Motor cyclist injured. On Tuesday, a tramcar, owned by the M.C.C., was in collision with a motor cycle, owned and ridden by Robert Owen Carter, of Grange-avenue, Woodford, at Friern Barnet-road, near Macdonald-road. Carter received injuries to the right leg.

Jul 22: Betstyle Hall. The opening of Betstyle Hall, the upper portion of the fine extension to the Friern Barnet Liberal and Radical Club, took place on Saturday. It will be remembered that the Billiard Hall was opened a few weeks ago.

Jul 29: Friern Lane. Finchley and Friern Barnet Councils will proceed simultaneously with the widening of Friern Lane.

Aug 5: Would Not Sell. Friern Barnet Council have not agreed to a suggestion from the North Metropolitan Electric Power Supply Co., that they should sell a freehold plot within Friary Park for a transformer sub-station.

Aug 12: Proposed Junction Improvement. For a long time the dangerous nature of the cross traffic at the junction of Woodhouse Road, Colney Hatch Lane, Friern Barnet Road and Friern Barnet Lane, has caused considerable anxiety. Recently a temporary refuge was placed at the mouth of Colney Hatch Lane, and this has affected some relief. There is now a further proposal to round off the south-western corner of Colney Hatch Lane at an estimated cost of £447. This proposal has been submitted by Friern Barnet Council to Middlesex County Council. The sight line for traffic at this point is obscured by a high brick wall, and one effect of the proposal will be to remove this wall, and set it back some distance. The new sight line, it is stated, is none too extensive but it is the best that can be obtained without demolishing the adjoining furniture depository. It certainly will effect a marked improvement. The Middlesex County Council have agreed to contribute £175 towards the cost of the work.

Aug 19: Where Does Britain Come In? Out of 27,650,267 motor cars registered on January 1st last, 95 per cent were of American origin, and 22,137,344 were registered in the States.

Aug 26: Barrow Damaged. At High Street, North Finchley, on Wednesday, a motor car owned by Mr W. Fisher, of Barnes, was in collision with a costermonger's barrow, in charge of Mr Booth, Bellevue Road, New Southgate. The barrow was damaged.

Sept 2: Tenant Purchase Houses. The Council have seventeen of the twenty Tenant-purchase houses now being erected in Oakleigh Road, North, available for Local residents on payment of an initial deposit of £50, and a rent of £1 0s 6d weekly for 20 years from date of occupation. Tenants, in addition, paying rates. Fuller particulars of the scheme and application forms can be obtained from the undersigned. G.T. Fletcher, Clerk to the Council, Council Offices, The Priory, N11.

Sept 9: Advertisement. F.W. Woolworth & Co Ltd. 3d and 6d Stores. Opening Shortly at Tally Ho! Corner, North Finchley. Nothing over 6d. 88 per cent of the Goods are British made.

Sept 16: Dropped into Car. On Tuesday a tramcar trolley wheel was dislodged at North Finchley and fell on to a passing motor car, penetrating the roof.

Sept 23: Impressive Ceremony. The War Memorial, which stands in an important position opposite the entrance to the chapel in the Great Northern Cemetery, New Southgate, was unveiled on Saturday afternoon. The ceremony was attended by thousands of spectators. The memorial has been erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission, in honour of soldiers, sailors, and airmen, whose lives were sacrificed in the Great War, and who now lie buried in the Cemetery.

Sept 30: Letter to the Editor: Sir, The other day I read in your newspaper the remarks of a well-known Highgate Magistrate when fining an offender for exceeding the speed limit. The defence was that it was a very quiet part of the Great North Road, but the Magistrate happened to live quite near, in the Granville Road, he knew the spot quite well, and said he often had to wait some seconds or minutes before he could cross the road at that particular point.

I should be glad if a Magistrate or someone in authority would just walk from Woodhouse Road to Torrington Park one Sunday evening, and witness the flappers and hobble-de-hoys congregated on the pavement. They often necessitate residents in Finchley walking in the road to avoid them. On Sunday evenings they are an unmitigated nuisance and disgrace. Surely the Police or some other authority can do something to give these young people a "move-on." If matters are not speedily remedied, I shall send a copy of this letter to the chief inspector of Scotland Yard, for I feel he would move in the matter.

There is another matter: Residents in Friern Watch Avenue were threatened with a heavy fine if their houses were not numbered by a certain date, but this morning I had occasion to go to 74, Dollis Park, and found the houses on the right-hand side were numbered, but the left-hand side were un-numbered until I reached the bottom, for the one I visited is the last but one on the latter side, and I think is the only one numbered. Why should North Finchley be compelled to number their houses (I quite agree it should be done) and not Church End Finchley? If one side of the road to which I have referred is in the Parish of Finchley, and the other in Hendon, I am sorry to have troubled you - Yours etc. W.E. Hurcomb

Oct 7: Tram Driver Hurt. Due to the fog, on Tuesday a tramcar, driven by Mr H Phillips, of High Street, North Finchley, was in collision with a steam lorry. Mr Phillips had his right forearm injured.

Oct 14: Renumbering. Pollard Road is to be renumbered. **Save your life** – “It’s your life, save it” is the wording of a “Safety First” sign erected at Friern Barnet Road – Woodhouse Road junction

Oct 21: To Keep Balls Out. A wire fence is to be erected above the existing oak fence to prevent balls going out of Woodhouse School grounds.

Oct 28: Advertisement. Dogs and Cats. If you wish to part with your Cats or Dogs, don’t turn them out to face the miseries of the streets; send a card to: Miss L. Snow, Hon Sec, 100 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, and they will be called for. Sick animals chloroformed at home. ‘Phone Tottenham 1563.

Nov 4: For Church Hall. In order to stimulate activity in providing funds for a parish hall for the Parish Church and St John’s Church, “bricks” are to be sold. The proposed hall is in Georgian style.

Nov 11: Friern Barnet Council Meeting. The Engineer and Surveyor submitted correspondence between himself and the owners of some of the omnibus services regarding the excessive speed of ‘buses at Oakleigh Road North. The Council decided that the action of the Engineer and Surveyor in bringing to the Omnibus Companies’ notice the cases of dangerous driving reported in the correspondence be strongly supported.

Nov 18: Advertisement. Special This Week: English Lamb 1/2d per lb. Small Loin of Pork 1/6d per lb. Small Choice Turkeys 1/2d per lb. S. Pulham & Sons Ltd. Branches Everywhere.

Nov 25: Advertisement. Friars Hill School, Torrington Park N.12 – Principal Mrs Roberts. Day School for Girls 8 to 18; Kindergarten for Boys and Girls 5 to 8. Principal and staff are all fully qualified and trained mistresses. Thorough education on “New Ideal” lines. Spacious airy classrooms facing Friary Park.

Dec 2: Occasional Notes. The weather is supposed to be the last resource of the journalist in search for copy. But really the weather in the past week has been unspeakable. Could anything have been more irritating than last Saturday’s blanket of fog, interfering, as our last page so graphically shows, with the important local fixtures for that date. Never have I experienced so objectionable a mixture of fog, darkness, and cold steady rain. From 9 to 9.30 a.m. conditions remained almost intolerable, and then gradually brightened. But even at its best Tuesday morning was a failure. The latter half of November this year will be remembered as a peculiarly gloomy introduction to winter.

Dec 9: Friern Barnet Council. The Clerk reported an interview with Mr Howden, the local representative of the National Homing Union, on the question of keeping pigeons by tenants of the Council houses. The Housing committee will consider the matter at their next meeting, when a report will be submitted of the number of cases where pigeons are being kept.

Dec 16: **Gift Problems Solved.** No pains are spared at E.H. Paine, Regents Parade, North Finchley, to accommodate you with a suitable gift. I found myself confronted with an immense amount of men's wear that I wanted, but I didn't want to buy it for myself. So I advise all men to lead their feminine relations into the shop, and – leave the rest to them. Then you won't leave without something.

Dec 23: **Parrot Overcome by Fumes.** Believed to have been caused by the overheating of a mineral oil stove, a fire broke out in the sitting room of Floral Cottage, Ballards Lane, occupied by Mr Burr, on Tuesday. A piano, pedestal gramophone, and other furniture were damaged. A parrot, overcome by the fumes and smoke, died.

Dec 30: **Christmas Blizzard.** The prophets of a white Christmas were right after all, only they had to wait until the late evening of Christmas day before their prophecies matured. Rain turned to sleet, and sleet to snow, and the world turned white as the evening advanced. Snow fell the whole night, and well into the morning of Boxing Day. A single track tramway service was operated on the Great North Road until 10.30 a.m. on Boxing Day. By that time both sets of metals had been more or less cleared, and a more or less normal service was operated. However, even then the cars were impeded from time to time, and snow which had accumulated on the safety gate, had to be cleared. Drivers and conductors found willing helpers, and index boards made useful tools.

BOOK REVIEW

BY John Donovan

"Around Whetstone & North Finchley in Old Photographs" compiled by John Heathfield

This attractive book is no longer in print but is available in your local libraries. As the back cover resumé states, it "documents the dramatic transformation that has taken place over the last one hundred years in the area around Whetstone and the Great North Road." It is essentially a picture book (with two black & white half-plates on most of its 158 pages) which makes it initially inviting, but John's erudite introduction and captions are what lifts it well above the 'coffee table' class of book. We learn, for example, that 'Totteridge' was originally Saxon for 'Tatta's Ridge', and that there was a settlement near Friern Barnet as early as 1200, both dates predating photography by a few years. Furthermore the inclusion of a decent index

is an added luxury.

The book is arranged in six sections one of which covers Friern Barnet and New Southgate and there is a wealth of information relevant to the Society's various Project Groups; photographs of the Gaumont, Grand Hall and Coronation cinemas, Finchley roller skating rink, seven forms of transport in one picture, indeed one hardly knows where to begin. This is a very easy book to browse, but the pictures contain so much historical detail, and then there are the human stories, such as that of the head teacher with 39 years service in 1904 who was denied a pension by the local council because she was just *one week* short of the required service period; a "meanness worthy of recording for posterity" says John!

Whenever I read books like this for any locality, I'm always struck by how much pleasanter the places seemed

before the war: no high-rise buildings, no forest of road signs and street furniture, and yet some areas have remained almost unchanged, and one can amuse oneself trying to identify buildings that are still standing in photos of, say, the High Road at North Finchley.

I urge you to read this book: I know you will thank me afterwards.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our next Public Meeting will be on **Tuesday 4 Sept**, when the topic will be Women in Roman Britain. This should prove to be very interesting, particularly as there is now so much emphasis on all things Roman.

During the summer break Ollie Natelson will conduct a walk round Friary Park on **Sun 21 July** which will start at the entrance in Friern Barnet Lane at 2.00pm. The walk will end with a visit to St. James Church. There will be a charge of £1.

Our new Events Secretary, Janet Liversidge, is busy planning our programme for 2002 and we will let you know as soon as this has been finalised. Next year we plan to have our Meetings on the *fourth* Tuesday of the month which will avoid our clashing with HADAS, some of whose members have been unable to attend our meetings. Put these dates in your 2002 diary now!

GASHOLDER TO GO?

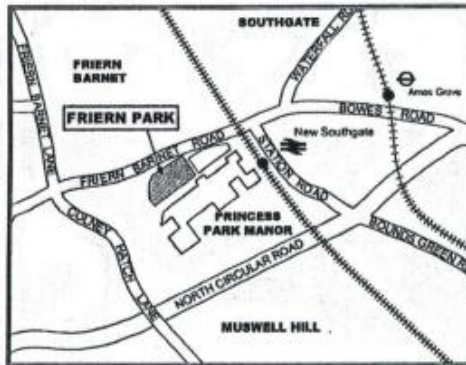
We believe that the gasholder at the junction with Station Road and the North Circular is due to be demolished next year. It is also worth noting that the Express Motors building on the opposite side of the road has now been knocked down. Do these two events mean that the notorious traffic bottleneck at the junction of the North Circular and Bounds Green Road will be remedied at last? We will keep you posted.



OUR NEW PARK

The leaflet below was given only limited distribution by Barnet Council so it is doubtful if many people know of the existence of Friern Park. Incidentally, we think this name is confusing as we already have Friary Park, Friern Park (the street) and Friern Retail Park. If you can think of a better name, please let Ollie Natelson know (020 8361 2496) and we will contact the Council.

A new park is opening in your area **Friern Park**



**Friern Park is on the old Friern
Hospital site. It will open to the
public on Monday 30 April.**



Friern Barnet & District
Local History Society



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